

Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin

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National Weather Summary March 21 - 27, 2010

Highlights: A series of storms arced across the **Northwest** and onto the **central and southern Plains**, maintaining unsettled, breezy conditions. The storms also produced as much as 1 to 4 inches of rain from the **Mid-South and the middle Mississippi Valley into the Northeast**. From the **Pacific Northwest to the northern and central Rockies**, precipitation aided winter grains and improved high-elevation snow packs. Despite the late-season boost in moisture, summer water-supply shortages remained a significant concern across the **northern half of the West**. Farther east, winter wheat began to break dormancy under mild, dry conditions on the **northern Plains**, where temperatures occasionally climbed above 60 degrees F. On the **central and southern Plains**, rain and wet snow slowed fieldwork but maintained generally favorable moisture levels for pastures and winter wheat. Meanwhile, lowland flooding persisted in parts of the **upper Midwest**, despite a stretch of mild, mostly dry weather. In the **Ohio and middle Mississippi Valleys**, at least an inch of rain largely postponed pre-planting fieldwork activities. Fieldwork was also stalled by heavy rain across the **interior Southeast**, but planting activities proceeded - despite cool conditions - from **southern Texas into Georgia and the Carolinas**. Weekly temperatures averaged more than 5 degrees F below normal across parts of the **Deep South**, but ranged from 5 to 10 degrees F above normal across the **northern High Plains**, the **upper Midwest**, and the **northern Mid-Atlantic region**.

Early in the week, chilly air continued to spread across the **Deep South**. Daily-record lows in **southern Texas** for March 21 included 31 degrees F in **Del Rio**, 36 degrees F in **Harlingen**, and 37 degrees F in **Brownsville**. **Harlingen** (37 degrees F) posted another daily-record low on March 22, along with **Wichita Falls, TX** (25 degrees F). In addition, some snow lingered across the **Mid-South** on March 21, when **Harrison, AR**, received a daily-record total of 6.0 inches. Meanwhile, a cold front swept warmth out of the **East**, but not before daily-record highs were established on March 21 in locations such as **Allentown, PA** (74 degrees F), and **Binghamton, NY** (66 degrees F). Heavy rain accompanied the return to cool weather in the **East**, where daily-record amounts for March 23 reached 3.30 inches in **Providence, RI**; 2.22 inches in **Boston, MA**; and 2.04 inches in **Bangor, ME**. **Monpelier, VT**, noted consecutive daily-record amounts on March 22-23, totaling 2.02 inches.

Farther west, another storm quickly moved in behind the departing **Eastern** system. On March 22-23, snowfall totaled 18 inches on **Casper Mountain**, just south of **Casper, WY**. In **Colorado**, official totals for March 23-24 included 10.8 inches in **Denver**, 5.5 inches in **Colorado Springs**, and 4.7 inches in **Pueblo**. On March 24-25, snowfall totals reached 8.1 inches in **Dalhart, TX**, and 8.0 inches in **Boise City, OK**. Heavy rain fell farther east, with daily-record totals reported on March 25 in **Missouri** locations such as **Joplin** (1.93 inches) and **West Plains** (1.40 inches). Toward week's end, yet another storm arrived in the **Northwest**, where **Pocatello, ID** (3.0 inches), received a daily-record snowfall for March 26. **Ouray, CO**, was blanketed by 15.5 inches of snow in a 24-hour period on March 26-27. Meanwhile, high winds raked the **Southwest**, where **El Paso, TX**, experienced a dust storm and clocked a westerly wind gust to 84 m.p.h. on March 26. Other peak gusts on March 26 included 78 m.p.h. on **Whitaker Peak in southern California** and 71 m.p.h. at **Fort Stanton, NM**. Farther north and east, flooding persisted in parts of the **upper Midwest**. For example, the **West Fork of the Des Moines River** climbed 5.26 feet above flood stage at **Estherville, IA**, on March 23, representing the highest water level there since the summer of 1993. The **Red**

River crest continued to move northward and reached **Drayton, ND** (10.19 feet above flood stage; seventh-highest level on record) on March 28.

Mild, mostly dry weather prevailed across the **Alaskan mainland**, while rain and snow affected the State's southern tier. **Juneau's** weekly total of 1.58 inches included daily-record precipitation and snowfall totals (0.70 and 3.1 inches, respectively) on March 23. Meanwhile, season-to-date snowfall through March 27 stood at just 24.8 inches (38 percent of normal) in **Fairbanks** and 36.7 inches (41 percent) in **McGrath**. Farther south, **Hawaiian** showers were mostly confined to windward locations. On March 21-22, 24-hour **Big Island** totals included 4.95 inches in **Laupahoehoe** and 3.91 inches in **Piihonua**. Elsewhere on the **Big Island**, **Hilo's** month-to-date rainfall was 7.78 inches (63 percent of normal), while the year-to-date total stood at just 10.10 inches (33 percent). Meanwhile on **Oahu**, **Honolulu** received 1.97 inches (29 percent of normal) from January 1 – March 27.

*National Weather Summary provided by USDA's World Agricultural Outlook Board.
For more information, call (202) 720-2397.*

Agricultural Summary

March 22 - 28, 2010

Highlights: Below average temperatures persisted across much of the southern half of the country, with locations in the central Rocky Mountains, Texas, and Southeast falling to as many as 8 degrees below normal. In contrast, areas in the northern Rocky Mountains, Great Lakes, and mid-Atlantic Coast States recorded temperatures as many as 10 degrees above average. With the exception of coastal areas in the Pacific Northwest, much of the western half of the country was dry during the week. Elsewhere, portions of the eastern Corn Belt, the Ohio and Tennessee Valleys, New England, and Florida received more than 200 percent of their normal precipitation during the week.

In Georgia, warmer temperatures and dry weather led to increased fieldwork with many producers planting their spring crops. Although nearly 20 percent of the State's corn crop was planted during the week, overall progress remained well behind last year and the 5-year average. Nearly half of the winter wheat crop was jointed and some fields have entered the boot stage.

Cooler than normal temperatures and rainfall limited fieldwork in Arkansas to 3 days during the week. Rice seeding was underway ahead of last year's pace, but slightly behind normal. The winter wheat crop was reported in mostly fair to good condition, with stripe rust evident in some fields.

As weather conditions allowed, producers in the Northern High Plains of Texas were busy top dressing their winter wheat crop. Warm temperatures in South Texas during the week aided head development in the oat crop. Corn planting in the Blacklands was hampered by excessive rainfall, while a few fields along the Upper Coast were expected to recover following a recent hail storm. Despite below average soil temperatures in the Coastal Bend, sorghum producers continued to plant their crop. Emergence was evident in early-planted fields. Producers in the High and Low Plains were waiting for more favorable soil conditions and warmer temperatures before planting their cotton crop. In the Trans-Pecos, cotton land was being pre-irrigated.

Muddy fields in Colorado limited fieldwork to less than 3 days during the week. Winter wheat was reported in mostly good to excellent condition, with 4 percent of the crop at or beyond the jointing stage. Barley and spring wheat seeding reached 12 and 7 percent complete by week's end, respectively. Sugarbeet planting was delayed due to recent changes in crop insurance.

Temperatures in Arizona were mostly below normal during the week and rainfall was limited to less than 5 percent of normal for much of the State. Cotton producers had planted 20 percent of their 2010 crop, ahead of last year and the 5-year average. Heading of the barley and Durum wheat crops was well ahead of normal. Alfalfa harvest continued on over two-thirds of the State's acreage. Vegetable growers continued to ship a variety of crops.

Spring planting continued at a rapid pace in Washington. Producers in the two major producing counties had seeded 38 and 50 percent of their barley and spring wheat crops, respectively, well ahead of last year and the 5-year average. Emergence was evident on nearly 20 percent or more of the acreage. Freezing temperatures overnight necessitated frost protection measures for fruit and vegetable crops in the Yakima Valley. Hop plants were emerging and producers were stringing up their yards.

In California, alfalfa fields were cut for hay and green chopped for silage. Some winter wheat fields were also harvested for silage. Heading was evident in other small grain crops. Rice producers continued field maintenance activities including herbicide application and straw burning. Pre-planting operations continued for a number of row crops. Orchard producers were busy harvesting grapefruit, lemons, Navel and Valencia oranges, and tangerines. Strawberry fields in the San Joaquin Valley were setting fruit, while warmer temperatures along the Central Coast aided budding in wine grape vineyards.

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